THOUGHTS FROM PASTOR BEN

One of my childhood memories of Christmas-time is listening to my parents records. We would put on Evi as we decorated the Christmas tree—"Come on ring those bells, light the Christmas tree." Another one that I remember fondly is on one of my dad's old single vinyl records—"Snoopy's Christmas" sung by The Royal Guardsmen from 1967.

The song tells the fictitious story of that cartoon dog Snoopy engaging in aerial combat during World War I with the German flying ace, the Red Baron. The song speaks of an intense fight taking place on Christmas Eve. I'll let the song tell the story. Sing it if you wish.

The Baron had Snoopy dead in his sights / He reached for the trigger to pull it up tight
Why he didn't shoot, well, we'll never know / Or was it the bells from the village below.

Christmas bells those Christmas bells, Ringing through the land
Bringing peace to all the world, And good will to man

The Baron made Snoopy fly to the Rhine / And forced him to land behind the enemy lines
Snoopy was certain that this was the end / When the Baron cried out, "Merry Christmas, my friend"

The song goes on with the Red Baron giving a Christmas toast and Snoopy saluting his host. That night, they were at peace. I remember liking the song right away because it spoke of the unexpected. It spoke of an enemy relinquishing his opportunity to destroy in favor of peace. It spoke to me the power of Christmas.

While the song is fiction, something like this actually did happen in WWI. In 1914, the Germans initiated a Christmas Truce with the British. Soldiers came out of their trenches. Gifts were exchanged between enemies. Some enemies shared pictures of their families. Some engaged in a soccer matches upon the field between the trenches that just hours before would have been littered with machine gun fire.

Now of course, the fighting soon began again and in subsequent years the commanders sought to never let it happen again, but the Christmas Truce provides a glimpse of the power of the gospel. In the midst of our chaos, the birth of Jesus changes things.

What if we would take this to heart and seek to be peacemakers as those being remade in the image of our Creator. What would that mean for our family gatherings? What Christmas Truce could we lead? What would that look like in situations of disagreement with issues at church, the workplace, or at home? And more so, what would happen if we sought to live the peacemaking of Christmas year-round? "Christmas bells those Christmas bells, ringing through the land, bringing peace to all the world and good will to men." Merry Christmas!

Pastor Ben



From the Vision Team…….. By Judy Joling

The Vision Team extends a sincere thank you to everyone in the congregation who completed and returned their church survey. The information gleaned from these surveys has been compiled and will be reviewed by the Vision Team at our next meeting on December 7th.

Each of the various ministry teams – Worship, First Impressions, Fellowship, Evangelism, Building, Education, and Boosters – also recently completed questionnaires. The Vision Team met in November to go over those responses. We are now in the process of meeting with each team to further discuss their responses and to expand on their answers.

During the coming months, The Vision Team will be processing a good deal of information that we trust will be valuable in learning what it is our church does well, where more direction is needed, and what changes may be warranted. The Vision Team is fully aware that we are engaged in an on-going process. As His church, God calls us, gathers us, and sends us. The Vision Team is prayerfully considering how we can best be the church God call us to be.

Please contact either Scott Brower or Pastor Ben should there be questions to ask, ideas to share, or concerns to be addressed.

It's that time of year again. We are busy buying and wrapping presents, making out lists of things to do, and sending Christmas cards to the ones we love and care for.



YPS would like to help you. If you would like to send a card to someone here at Comstock Church we can help. Just do your cards as you would normally, but don't mail them. We will have a big Christmas bag by the back table in the sanctuary. Please place your cards in this bag. You don't even have to address them. Just put the person or persons' first and last name on the outside of the envelope and place them in the bag. On Sunday December 20, in the afternoon, YPS will sort the cards, tie them with a pretty bow, and add something sweet and we will put them in the mail boxes at church. After we have sorted the cards, we will go caroling to our shut-ins and deliver their cards to them. So let us be of service to you and don't forget to have your cards to church by the morning service of Sunday December 20.

Merry Christmas from all of us
YPS

Courtney, Katelynn, James, Josh, Eric, Seth, Matt, Emma, Scott, Allison, Molly, Rachel, Lyn & Will

Council Highlights

The Council met on November 17 to pray for the church and deal with various matters. These are some highlights.

I. Motion was approved to install heat tape to help with a continuous problem of ice accumulation on part of the roof. An amount of $2500 was approved for purchase and installation.

II. The membership of Helen Karsten was transferred to Neland Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids at her request. We pray for her new connection with this new fellowship.

III. Council approved the slate of nominees for both elder and deacon. For a detailed discussion of this, please refer to letter attached to the congregational meeting agenda found in your boxes.

IV. The budget for the new fiscal year (November '09 – October '10) was discussed and approved for presentation at the congregational meeting.

V. We discussed the need to investigate new opportunities in support of missions, as the Dykgraafs retired this past year. Council charged the Evangelism Team with the task of putting forth a proposal to Council on potential ministries or missionaries to sponsor.

Submitted by Howard Nash, clerk

Comstock Food Pantry



On-Going Support for the Comstock Food Pantry - David Joling

The Deacons are very grateful for the generosity of the congregation in supporting the Comstock Community Food Pantry each and every month. For those who might be unfamiliar with the food Pantry, the Deacons provide the following information.

The Comstock Community Food Pantry serves individuals and families in Comstock, Galesburg, and the east side of Kalamazoo. The pantry is part of the Loaves and Fishes network. Those in need, call Loaves and Fishes, 343-3663, Monday- Friday 9:00 am- 3:00pm, and they are referred to the closest pantry that is open on that day.

The Comstock Pantry is open Tuesday and Thursday from 1:00 – 3:00 P.M. It is able to serve up to 15 families on each of those days. A family group may be 1 person or 9, however many is in the household. On a monthly basis, between 80 and 100 households, or 200 – 350 individuals, are served.

The most difficult times for families needing the food pantry are in the summer and over the holiday breaks. This is the time that children who would normally receive free or reduced breakfast and lunch at school are now home for three meals a day.

Items in high demand include personal care items: shampoo, toothpaste, deodorant, bath soap, dish soap, and laundry detergent, because those items cannot be purchased with food stamps. Next comes basic food items: peanut butter; jelly; cereal; and of course, canned meals such as soup, stew, chili, spaghetti, etc.

Recent correspondence from Mary Gustas, Executive Director of the Community Center, contained this message: We are particularly grateful to the continued support that we receive from the Comstock Christian Reformed Church in supplying many needed items.

We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. *(NIV, Romans 12:6-8)*

A Recipe To Live By

Blend one cup of love and one cup of kindness
Add alternately in small portions one cup of appreciation and three cups of pleasant companionship into which has been sifted three teaspoons of deserving praise.
Flavor with one teaspoon carefully chosen advice.
Lightly fold in one cup of cheerfulness to which has been added a pinch of sorrow.
Pour with tender care into small clean hearts and let bake until well matured. Turn out on the surface of society, humbly invoke God's blessing and it will serve all mankind. *

Recently I was looking through some recipe books and I came upon this recipe from an Amish Cooking Book that I have. I would like to share it with all of you because it made me do some thinking about something that Pastor Ben told us in his Thanksgiving message. Remember the story about the family who thanked God for making all the traffic lights green so they could get home on time to watch American Idol? I wondered how often I put God where I think He should be in my world and then give Him some of my time. How many times have I missed opportunities to see God where He is because I wasn't looking? I started to think of all the 'God Moments' that have been in my life recently. For example: the excitement of the little kids to come up for prayer and then run off to children's worship with cheerful voices; or shopping with your best friend and finding that you are spending as much time sharing as shopping; or seeing your grandchildren stop in their tracks because there are rainbows on the front room floor from the sunshine coming through the windows; or having the opportunity to help some one pay for postage at the post office because they were a little short of money that day; or having the chance to get to know a great bunch of ladies through Bible study; or having breakfast with your mother-in-law and watching someone pick up the bill for three vets having breakfast together; or spending a not so quiet day with your daughters and grandchildren baking coffee cakes; or spending an evening putting up the Christmas tree with your husband. My list could go on and on, but you can make you own list. What are some of your 'God Moments'? Take some time this Christmas season between all the shopping, wrapping, baking and entertaining to make your list and then keep looking. God has so many more to give to each one of us than He has already given that we will soon realize that every moment can become a 'God Moment'!

*Recipe is from "Amish Cooking" Copyright claimed in Common Law 2008 "with explicit reservation of all rights".

submitted by Joanne Smit

Mac-n-Cheese Donations

As we all know from reading last month's communicator, our mac-n-cheese food drive is for the Greater Kalamazoo Food Drive. Here is an update on which district is winning our friendly competition.

District	Donation amount	District	Donation amount
A-C	39 boxes	M-P	244 boxes
D-F	48 boxes	S	163 boxes
G-L	49 boxes	T-Z	80 boxes

As you can see the district of Ken Smit and Dwain Cramer which is last names beginning with letters M-P has a big lead. Let's try to all catch up! Please have your donations at church by Thursday, Dec. 17.

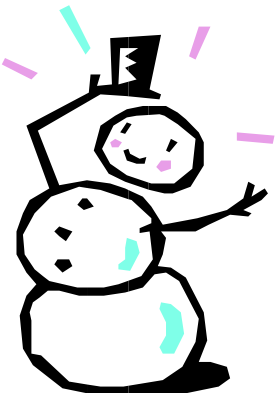
Library Notes

We have lots of Christmas material both old and new – books, movies, and music – to get you into the holiday spirit, but more importantly, to get the minds and hearts of your families centered upon the reason for the season: our Lord Jesus Christ. Check out the welcome center, the library cart, or the display window & display shelves in the library to find them.

There are also some new non-seasonal items that may interest you:

BOOKS:

Pursued by God – The Amazing Life and Lasting Influence of John Calvin by *Christopher Meehan*. You may have read the recent article in the "Kalamazoo Gazette" about its former Religion reporter's new book. Meehan explores the human side of the great reformer, and gives us a readable glimpse into his personality, human relationships, and godly motivation.



Remember to show your "Ministry Perks" card at Family Christian stores.

Waking Lazarus by *T. L. Hines*. A dark and engrossing supernatural thriller that is ultimately positive and inspiring. (I received personal recommendations from a couple of respected Christian readers)

MOVIES:

"Mandie and the Secret Tunnel" – A generation of young girls have embraced the expansive "Mandie" book series, and now the first book is on the big screen! Set in the late 1800's in the mountain of North Carolina, there is enough adventure, mystery and good storytelling to please the whole family. Let's hope they continue to film more in the series!

"The Perfect Gift" – From the producers of "The Perfect Stranger" and "Another Perfect Stranger" comes a holiday story that carries and year-round message for the ages.

Let me take this opportunity to remind you to show your "Ministry Perks" cards when you shop at Family Bookstores this holiday season, and to THANK YOU for using them in the past. This year we were able to purchase $106.17 worth of extra library materials thanks to you!

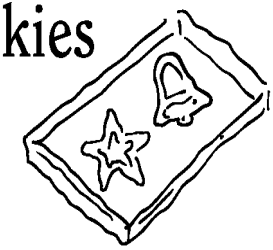
The Winter Seeking by V. H. Wright

This short novella is a simple story that makes a huge impact. As Mary Georgiana explores her sick mother's rekindled faith (merely in an effort to connect with her on some level), she studies the Christmas story in Luke and tries to imagine what it would be like to be a friend & confidante of Jesus' mother Mary. As I read the imaginary conversations between the two Marys, I had a glimpse of what the reality of bearing and rearing the Messiah must have been like, and I appreciated the wonder of the Christmas story on a whole new level. It really enhanced my observance of Christmas last year – why not try it yourself this year?

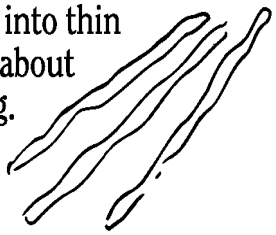


Book review

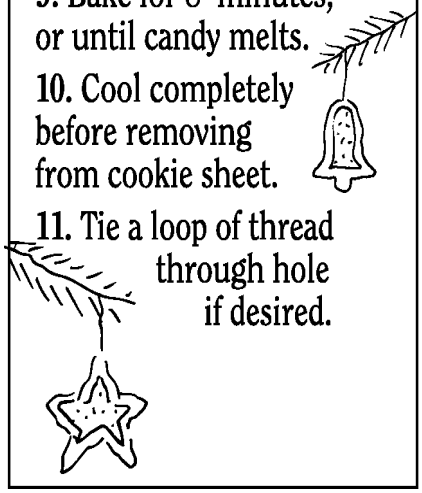
Bake "Stained-Glass" Cookies

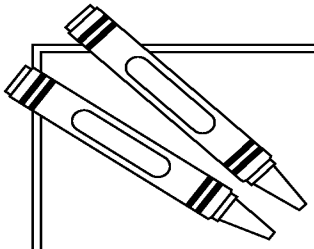


1. Mix your favorite cutout cookie recipe.
2. Chill overnight.
3. On waxed paper, roll dough into thin ropes, about 6" long.



4. Shape ropes into holiday symbols – stars, bells, etc.
5. Crush hard candies to make 2 cups.
6. Place shapes on well-greased cookie sheets.
7. Fill the openings with hard candies.
8. Use a toothpick to poke a hole in the top of each if you want to hang them.
9. Bake for 8 minutes, or until candy melts.
10. Cool completely before removing from cookie sheet.
11. Tie a loop of thread through hole if desired.





Just for KIDS

The Christmas Story

Each line below contains the letters to form a word that is part of the Christmas story. But each group of letters has 1 that is extra! Unscramble the words and write the extra letter on the lines at the bottom. What did we all receive at Christmas?

(1)	TGLBEHHEME	_____	___
(2)	NEAGLO	_____	___
(3)	NRMEDAG	_____	___
(4)	ODEKSNY	_____	___
(5)	AMGYR	_____	___
(6)	OHESJIP	_____	___
(7)	EFJSUS	_____	___
(8)	ITEENMSW	_____	___
(9)	SPHHDSREEO	_____	___
(10)	EMCFAL	_____	___
(11)	TLSRA	_____	___
(12)	CSSNUEO	_____	___
(13)	HEVSPE	_____	___
(14)	ENIN	_____	___

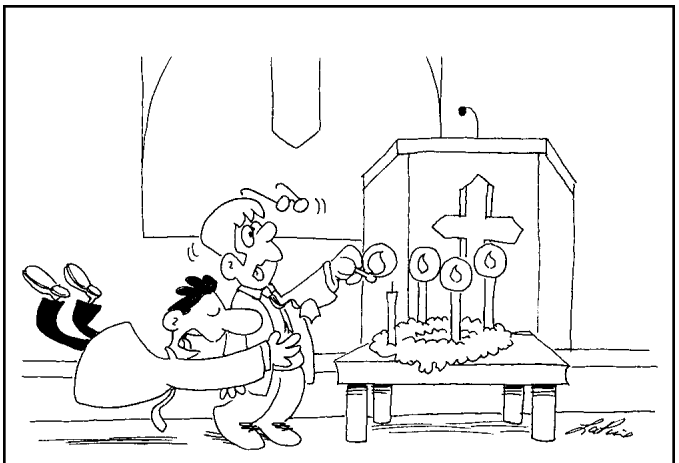
“ ____ ____ ____ , ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ”

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

9 10 11 12 13 14

Gods gift of love

Bethlehem (G), Angel (O), Manger (D), Donkey (S), Mary (G), Joseph (I), Jesus (F), Wise men (T), Shepherds (O), Camel (F), Star (L), Census (O), Sheep (V), Inn (E)



Pastor Howie saves the third Sunday of Advent.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY

2 Dale Cramer
6 Karen Smit
8 Betty Tuinier
20 Chris Selles
26 Marge Cramer
28 Mikayla Tiesman
29 Ann Cramer (96)
Ann Triemstra
30 James Karsten



HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

12/2/93 Todd & Karen Triemstra

The Communicator is published by and for the members and friends of Comstock CRC.

Editor: Lisa Bosch

Library Notes: Thea McNeilage

The January 2010 issue will come out on January 3. All articles for the January issue must be submitted by Dec. 29

December Schedules

NURSERY

	AM	PM
12/6	Mike & Dawn Kersten Family	Molly Selles
12/13	Jan Larkin, Katelynn & Amanda DeBruyn	Karen Triemstra
12/20	Greg & Sueann Nowak Family	Ronda Slager
Christmas Day - adult volunteer		
12/27	Roger & Chris Selles Family	Julie Smit

OFFERINGS

	AM	PM
12/6	General Fund/Christian Ed.	Missions
12/13	General Fund/Christian Ed.	Back to God Ministries, Intl.
12/20	General Fund/Christian Ed.	Bible League
12/25	CRWRC	
12/27	General Fund/Benevolent Fund	Missions

ACCOMPANISTS

	AM	PM
12/6	Kay Triemstra	Joy Koning
12/13	Barb Hassing	Linda French
12/20	Kay Triemstra	Anne Barnes
Christmas—Kay Triemstra		
12/27	Linda French	Barb Hassing

LIBRARIANS

12/6 Thea McNeilage
12/13 Marge Cramer
12/20 Karen Triemstra
12/27 Karen Triemstra

WELCOME CENTER

Walt & Muriel Cramer
Howard & Dodie Nash
Roger & Chris Selles
Jim & Tina Slager

GREETERS

AM - Paul & Evelyn Kemp
PM - Herm & Darlene Cramer

COFFEE SERVER

Joanne Dusseljee

SONG SERVICE LEADERS

12/6 Marilyn Poortenga
12/13 Kelli Terpstra
12/20 Mark Smit
12/27 Scott Brower

TECH TEAM

12/6 Scott & Seth Brower
12/13 Jim & Tina Slager
12/20 & 25 Mark & Matt Terpstra
12/27 Scott & Seth Brower

USHERS

AM - Jaime VanderLugt & Morgan French
PM - Ruth Slager
VALET PARKING - Sparky VanOosterum

December 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 7:00 Elders & Deacons	2 9:30 Ladies Bible Study 6:30 GEMS & Cadets	3 7:00 Ladies Bible study	4	5
6 6:15 YPS meets - Eric provides supper	7 7:00 Vision Team	8 7:00 Congregational Meeting	9 9:30 Layette Team	10	11	12 6:30-8:00 KFC meets Christmas party
13 5:00 Sunday School Christmas program Dinner for everyone after program	14	15 7:00 Council	16 9:30 Ladies Bible Study 6:30 GEMS & Cadets Christmas party	17 7:00 Ladies Bible Study	18	19 9:30 Greater Kalama-zoo Food Drive at the fairgrounds
20 3:30 YPS Christmas card sorting and caroling party	21 Winter Begins	22	23 8:30 Fellowship Breakfast at Theo & Stacys	24	25 9:30 Christmas Day Service	26
27 Thank you coffee for Anne Barnes after morning service	28	29 7:00 Elders & Deacons	30	31 New Years Eve Family Fun Night		